HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities Cultivating Vital, High Opportunity Places



Northern Maine: GroWashington-Aroostook A Regional Plan for Sustainable Development

A Newly Formed Partnership

Located at the northernmost tip of the Pine Tree State, the Counties of Washington and Aroostook face significant challenges. As the two largest counties in the state of Maine, they face median household incomes 70 percent lower than the national average. Despite a combined land mass of over 9,200 sq. miles, high housing and transportation costs have contributed to a loss of population in Washington and Aroostook counties, which now have a current combined population of only 104,175 residents.

Northern Maine is working with HUD to leverage its combined regional assets, from Washington's "mighty" nonprofit network to Aroostook's emerging biomass energy industry, into long-term economic viability. As the region's first strategic planning process, GroWashington-Aroostook will lay the foundation for a future of collaboration and mutual prosperity in Northern Maine.

Growing the Economy

The Northern Maine team is utilizing its Regional Planning grant to identify local assets and fill gaps in the economy. Through outreach to business owners, business assistance providers, and the general public, Northern Maine is developing an assessment of the region's business training and education needs. All local business sectors, from small, foodbased companies to large energy magnates, are being considered.

Through a strong partnership with the University of Maine GIS Service Center, the partner agencies will use scenario planning to analyze the effects and consequences of potential growth models on the region's infrastructure, housing stock, and natural resources.

NMDC's Regional Planning grant comes at a time

Description

Led by the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC), the Counties of Washington and Aroostook are coming together to chart a course for mutual economic success with an integrated plan that addresses housing, transportation, water infrastructure, and environmental planning, as well as economic opportunity and workforce development.

Federal Assistance

2010 Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant: \$800,000

Local Partners

- Washington County Council of Governments
- Sunrise County Economic Council
- Washington Aroostook Workforce Investment Board
- Washington Hancock Community Agency
- Aroostook Community Action Program
- University of Maine Machias GIS Service Center
- Aroostook Partners for Progress
- Maine State Planning Office
- Maine Department of Transportation

Achievements

- Developed connections with other strategic planning initiatives in workforce development and renewable energy
- Experienced effective connection with regional business community
- Developed better working relationships with tribal governments in the region
- Held a two-day workshop on best practices and rural strategic planning
- Streamlined Growth Management Act to enable adoption of regional plans Developing Coastal hazard inundation models

For more information visit:

www.gro-wa.org hud.gov/resilience



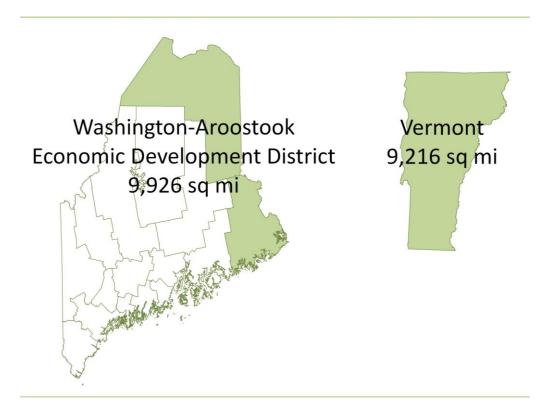
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when the two counties are in the process of realigning into a single Economic Development District. The Economic Development District will work to release its first joint Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a planning document for Economic Development Administration assistance funds. Components of the HUD Regional Planning process will be directly integrated into the CEDS process. The counties are working to align these and other efforts by strengthening interrelationships between local agencies. In doing so, they are working to ensure that investments and resources are coordinated to meet multiple economic, environmental and community objectives.

"The HUD funding will provide us with a much more comprehensive understanding of issues such as transportation, climate change, and workforce development in our region. It will allow us to make better decisions about the kinds of tools we have to change our economic future."

-Mike Eisensmith, Director of Regional Planning, NMDC

Citizens groups, such as the Mighty Women of Washington County, a 100-member social service coalition, and business and nonprofit leaders, are actively involved in this process to ensure Northern Maine develops in a manner that leverages and preserves its assets and minimizes burdens.



Rural Sustainable Development

Through environmental and transportation work, Northern Maine is charting a course toward rural sustainable development. The region's livability framework will offer solutions to problems that complement and respect their rural surroundings. For instance, much of Northern Maine's sewage infrastructure needs replacing, yet traditional, large sewage plants can be environmentally unfriendly and are unsuitable for the region's small cluster settlement pattern. The team is conducting research into both small-scale sewage treatment technology and public transportation systems that are suitable for their needs. The most promising options will be tested with demonstration projects that can be replicated at the local level if they prove successful.